

## Remaping Galician Studies in a Post-Nacional Context

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## REMAPPING GALICIAN STUDIES IN A POST-NATIONAL CONTEXT

José Colmeiro (2017)

*Peripheral Visions/Global Sounds. From Galicia to the World*  
(Liverpool: Liverpool University Press)

For over a decade, José Colmeiro has been contributing to the expansion and visibility of Galician studies in Anglophone academia by exploring the possibilities of a post-national paradigm (in line with the work of other scholars such as Kirsty Hooper) as well as the repositioning of Galicia and the study of contemporary Galician culture in the global age. As Colmeiro explains in his introduction, this book is the result of lengthy research and has benefited from his participation in a variety of international conferences (thus demonstrating the interest that Galician Studies are garnering across the world). Some of the chapters of the book are versions of previous works by the author that were included in key publications, such as the special issue on «Critical Approaches to the Nation in Galician Studies» (edited by Helena Miguélez-Carballeira and Kirsty Hooper) published in the *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (2008). Colmeiro's book must therefore be contextualised within the relevance that Galician Studies are achieving globally in the overarching discipline of Hispanic Studies, together with other works such as Hooper's *Writing Galicia into the World: New Cartographies, New Poetics* (2011), Eugenia Romero's *Contemporary Galician Culture in a Global Context. Movable Identities* (2012), Miguélez-Carballeira's *Galicia, a Sentimental Nation: Gender, Culture and Politics* (2013), and the recent volume *Rerouting Galician Studies: Multidisciplinary Interventions* (2017) edited by Benita Sampedro and José A. Losada Montero. In this regard, the book plays a twofold role. On the one hand, it studies the new possibilities opened up for Galician culture (with a particular focus on audio-visual products) in the post-Franco period and since the advent of globalisation, superseding binaries such as local/global, rural/urban or centre/periphery. On the other, it is also an example in itself of the opening of «Galicia and Galician studies out of the periphery and into the world» (p. 6).

The book is structured in three parts. Firstly, Colmeiro establishes the theoretical underpinning of his work in «Roots and Routes. Remapping Galician Culture in the Global Age». Going beyond «the old philological strait-jacket» (p. 12), he suggests a «post-national, non-canonical, and multi/interdisciplinary cultural studies approach» (p. 21), and argues for a «perspectival shift», whereby the periphery is not conceived as limiting or marginal. On the contrary, a «peripheral vision» would rather be more encompassing and innovative than that of the centre, and therefore more open, fluid, with a tendency to hybridity and creative fusion, which reflects the marked transnational character of Galician cultural identity, a consequence of its diasporic condition. Although Galicia is «positioned in a double geographical periphery» (p. 31), Colmeiro argues that it is precisely this position that can lead to a global vision that transcends geopolitical borders. This remapping of Galician culture from a post-peripheral and global position (a global Galicia that goes beyond cultural essentialism and becomes a global actor by exploring new ways of expressing its identity) is the theoretical backbone of the book, and it responds to the «deterritorialized nature of Galicia, which has only increased in the global age, requiring a new critical approach and a new cultural cartography» (p.46). Colmeiro's «deconstruction» of both Galicia and Galician studies' «peripheral status» (p. 21) provides a rich vision (as per the terminology used in the text) that will be of great use not only for specialists in the discipline but also to academics working on other peripheral cultures.

In the second and third parts («Peripheral Visions» and «Global Sounds», respectively), the author examines a wide range of titles and artists of Galician audio-visual production since the end of Francoism. «Peripheral Visions» focuses on Galician cinema, which is also located in a double periphery (firstly in the Spanish state, and globally in relation to Hollywood). This section provides a historical account of the development of Galician cinema while also addressing the terminological complexity regarding its conceptualisation. In a global context where cinema must increasingly be understood from a transnational perspective, the term «Galician Cinema» seems too restrictive and other more encompassing labels, such as «Cinema in Galicia» and «Cinema made in Galicia», seem to better respond to the post-national context in which Galician audio-visual production is inscribed (p. 126). The international success of the *Novo Cinema Galego* and the rise and fall of the Galician animation industry are some of the aspects of Galician cinema analysed in this section. It highlights the process of its «progressive deperipheralization» (p. 136), while

also addressing the ongoing difficulties endured by the industry, especially due to its fragmented nature, described by Colmeiro as «the Galician *minifundio* cinema infrastructure» (p. 136).

The third and final part of the book, «Global Sounds», offers an overview of Galician music, from the *Movida Vaguesa* to *rock bravú* and contemporary folk music. Starting from the peripheral position with respect to Madrid of the Galician *Movida*, the «rural inspired» style of some *rock bravú* bands in relation to urban music, and the traditional origins of folk music vis-à-vis the global music industry, this section shows the subversive potential of the peripheral vision and its challenge to the centre, for example in the irony of Siniestro Total's lyrics or the postcolonial and internationalist aesthetics of Os Resentidos. Further, it also shows the tendency toward a «cultural hybridity», as in the case of *rock bravú*, which affirms «Galicianness while rejecting essentialist notions of identity» (p. 246). For Colmeiro, the appearance of Galician rock bands reflected the social and economic modernisation of Galicia since the late 1970s, and the new interactions between the global and the local, the rural and the urban, that give way to a glocal and rurban Galician culture. The normalising effect that the TV programme *Xabarín Club* had for the Galician language in the 1990s, while maintaining a close relationship with *rock bravú* and broadcasting anime series dubbed into Galician, might be one of the best examples of this new paradigm. However, in terms of global reach, it has been the «re-invention of Galician folk music» by bands such as Milladoiro and Luar na Lubre and solo artists such as Carlos Núñez, Cristina Pato and Uxía Senlle that has achieved wide international recognition. As perhaps the most local form of Galician music, the global success of Galician folk artists shows how music can be instrumental in the affirmation of collective identity and at the same time become a vehicle of cultural hybridity that crosses borders and dialogues with a plethora of musical traditions (p. 293).

Although Colmeiro's exhaustive examination of Galician audio-visual production might not be completely new to someone familiar with contemporary Galician culture, it derives its strength from the reconceptualisation of Galicia's peripheral position and its relocation in the global age, without losing sight of the socio-historical factors that conditioned the appearance of these cultural products. It is, therefore, an important contribution to the development of Galician cultural studies and to its growing importance in the global academe. As the «Coda» that closes the book points out, the repositioning of Galician culture is an ongoing phenomenon, now led by «a new and diverse

generation of Galician creators, musicians, and filmmakers who are in dialogue with international trends [...] coming out of the periphery» (p. 308). In a similar vein, Colmeiro's innovative approach fulfils its objective and shows the global potential of Galician studies, which will be of interest not only to specialists but also to students who would like to delve into the complexities of a contemporary glocal and rurban Galicia.

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